DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 372 847 PS 022 589

AUTHOR Swick, Kevin J.
TITLE A Resource Guide for Developing Parent Education & Family Literacy Programs in Early Childhood.
INSTITUTION South Carolina Univ., Columbia. Coll. of Education.
PUB DATE Jun 94
NOTE 30p.; Published by School Improvement Council Assistance (SICA) for South Carolina's School Improvement Councils.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *At Risk Persons; Early Childhood Education; *Family Programs; Literacy Education; *Parent Education; *Parents as Teachers; Program Development; State Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Family Literacy; Family Resource and Support Programs; Family Support; *South Carolina

ABSTRACT

A critical element in South Carolina's Early Childhood Development and Academic Assistance Act is the parenting and family literacy component that targets families of children aged birth to 5 years, with a special emphasis on serving parents and families of children at risk for school failure. This manual offers guidelines for developing parenting and family literacy programs. It includes guidelines from national research and a description of four model programs--Parents As Teachers, Kenan Family Literacy Model, Family Service Centers, and Minnesota Early Learning and Development. South Carolina's Parent Education Program is also briefly described. The parenting and family literacy program guidelines include a discussion the four areas required by law to be addressed in parenting and family literacy programs, specifically, parent education, services for at-risk families, developmental and health screenings, and adult education. The guide also includes a discussion of program evaluation. The three phases of program development--planning, implementation, and continuing evaluation--are outlined. The planning section includes discussion of needs assessment, use of existing resources, and program framework. The implementation discussion addresses program location, staffing, public awareness, policies and procedures, and support systems. The evaluation section offers questions and strategies to use for program evaluation. Five appendices contain: (1) a list of 14 references and suggested readings; (2) sample program designs; (3) a list of South Carolina Parent Education Program Technical Assistance Centers; (4) a parenting and family literacy implementation checklist; and (5) a list of 10 steps for program developers to school readiness. (TJQ)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 372 847

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

sic

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Kevin J. Swick

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

A Resource Guide for Developing

Parent Education & Family Literacy Programs in Early Childhood

Kevin J. Swick, Ph.D.

PS 022589

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A Resource Guide For Developing

Parent Education & Family Literacy Programs in Early Childhood

Kevin J. Swick, Ph.D.
Professor, Early Childhood Education
College of Education
University of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina 29208
803-777-5129

Published by School Improvement Council Assistance (SICA)
for South Carolina's School Improvement Councils
June, 1994

SICA
College of Education, Suite 023
University of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina 29208
803-777-7658
800-868-2232

Kevin J. Swick, Ph.D., is Professor of Early Childhood Education at USC Columbia and author of *A Resource Guide for Developing Parent Education & Family Literacy Programs in Early Childhood* as well as *Empowering At-Risk Families During the Early Childhood Years*, available from the National Education Association. His most recent book, *Strengthening Families During the Early Childhood Years*, is published by Stipes Publishing of Champaign, Illinois.

SICA is an independent, non-regulatory agency whose mission is to help South Carolina's school improvement councils carry out their responsibilities through training, technical assistance, print resources, and current research about the state's school improvement councils.

Additional copies of *A Resource Guide for Developing Parent Education & Family Literacy Programs in Early Childhood* are available to South Carolina school improvement council members, educators and interested citizens at no cost. Portions of the guide may be reproduced to enhance school and district Act 135 planning efforts. Please cite *A Resource Guide for Developing Parent Education & Family Literacy Programs in Early Childhood*, Kevin J. Swick, School Improvement Council Assistance.

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Guidelines from National Research 1

South Carolina's Parent Education Program 3

Parenting/Family Literacy Program Guidelines 4

Developing Programs to Meet Local Needs 7

Summary 14

Appendices

- Appendix A: References and Suggested Further Reading
- Appendix B: Sample Program Designs
- Appendix C: South Carolina Parent Education Program Technical Assistance Centers
- Appendix D: Parenting/Family Literacy and Implementation Checklist
- Appendix E: 10 Steps to School Readiness

Introduction

A critical element in South Carolina's Early Childhood Development and Academic Assistance Act, better known as Act 135, is the Parenting and Family Literacy component. Districts are required to establish parenting/family literacy efforts that target families who have children ages birth through 5 years, with a special emphasis on serving parents and families of children who are at risk for school failure. Further, the intent is for districts to design programs that are interrelated with their overall early childhood system and that are closely connected to existing parenting and family service efforts in the community.

In preparation for carrying out this part of Act 135, districts and schools need to consider four elements: findings from national research on parent education, family literacy, and family support; recent efforts in parent education and family literacy programs in South Carolina, particularly the work of the Target 2000 Parent Education Programs; guidelines established in the legislation for the design of programs; and adaptation of programs and practices to meet local needs.

Guidelines from National Research

Research carried out on exemplary parent education and family literacy programs at the national and state levels suggests several guidelines helpful in designing responsive and effective projects (Powell, 1989; Swick, 1993; Weiss & Jacobs, 1988):

- Utilize a comprehensive approach that includes services that address health, social, educational, and related needs of children, parents, and families;
- Focus program activities on preventing risk factors that often influence families negatively;
- Develop program activities where parents can be engaged in intensive, continuing educational and support services;
- Involve parents in the identification of program activities and services that are truly responsive to their needs;
- Build program philosophy and practices that are based on a family strengths approach rather than on family weaknesses;
- Utilize parents as resources in the design and implementation of activities;
- Capitalize on parent talents by developing mentoring and networking programs;
- Develop a variety of program activities where the needs of specific populations such as teen mothers can be met;
- Organize delivery systems such as group meetings, home visits, telecommunication programs, and other strategies to accommodate diverse parent and family needs;
- Utilize supportive services like child care, transportation, and adaptive scheduling that increase the possibilities for parent participation;
- Use a case management system to track families' progress in meeting specified needs and to provide the program with feedback on the effectiveness of activities;
- Create a climate where equitable parent-professional relationships are valued and practiced; and
- Evaluate program efforts on a continuous basis with parent and staff input as major data sources.

Four programs that have integrated some of these guidelines and that deserve close attention are: Parents As Teachers, Kenan Family Literacy Model, Family Service Centers, and Minnesota's Early Learning and Development Program. Each of these programs is briefly described in the following sections, with additional program details provided in Appendix B.

Parents As Teachers **(PAT)**: A nationally validated program, PAT emerged from the research and development work of Burton L. White (1988). The program provides parent education beginning in the third trimester of pregnancy until the child's third birthday. In some new PAT programs, the effort has been expanded to include prenatal care and follow-up services beyond age 3. Services provided include help during pregnancy for preparing the parent to be a parent, child development information, and developmental screenings. Parents are also linked with needed family services. Services are provided through home visits, group meetings, newsletters, parent centers, and referrals. The goals include providing parents with knowledge of child development, helping parents to gain confidence in their child-rearing practices, enhancing the cognitive, language, and social development of participating children, providing parents with information to detect and reduce incidences of handicapping conditions in their children (particularly vision and hearing), and helping parents develop positive connections with the program, school, and community.

Kenan Family Literacy Model: Initiated in 1988-89 with funding from the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust, the program attempts to improve education for at-risk children by breaking the cycle of illiteracy and undereducation. The program includes four components: parent literacy training, parenting and parent education, early childhood education, and human resources development. Parent literacy attempts to provide parents with individualized assistance on educational goals established by the parents. Using a combination of parent time (where parents learn and discuss critical parenting skills and issues) and parent-child time (where parents observe trained caregivers interact with children), parent education is made realistic for parents. The early childhood education component is the High/Scope Curriculum which is described separately in Appendix B. Human resources are used to strengthen the family's functioning.

Family Service Centers: Integrating needed educational, social, and health services into local schools is becoming a major prevention model. This direction is seen in various forms, but its basic intent is to blend various services into a meaningful system of family empowerment. This concept, while still focused on at-risk families, is rapidly moving toward meeting the needs of all families. Using interagency services in a unified fashion provides more accessibility and meaning to the term prevention. This approach emphasizes the use of family services in locations that are easily accessible to parents and children.

Minnesota Early Learning and Development **(MELD)**: Developed and refined over a 20-year period, MELD is a community-based parent and family support program that emphasizes child development topics such as parent-child relationships, child rearing,

child development stages, health and nutrition, family management, and related parenting issues. The program also has a major goal of helping parents establish support networks with neighbors and with community agencies (Elwood, 1988). Parents are very involved in guiding the program's work by accepting group leadership roles and helping to organize various program activities. Each community is encouraged to develop program activities that address their specific needs. MELD's long-range goal is to help families become as strong as possible and to involve parents in helping each other solve problems.

South Carolina's Parent Education Program

South Carolina's Parent Education Program was initiated in the Target 2000 legislation as a pilot project in 1989 and is now being expanded to include all school districts under Act 135. The Target 2000 legislation was developed with the intent of strengthening parents' competence in being their children's primary teachers from birth to age 5. The program focused on improving children's school readiness through comprehensive parent and family educational and support services. Twenty-one pilot projects experimented with various approaches to parent education that attempted to:

- Demonstrate effective methods of parent training and support that enable parents to excel in their roles as the primary teachers of their preschool children;
- Develop and coordinate appropriate services based on the growth and development of the child;
- Improve the education, skills, and employment of parents toward having a positive influence on the growth and development of the child; and
- Assure preschool developmental screening for all children whose families are served in the program.

The pilot projects designed and implemented programs that were based on their unique community needs. While each project focused on local needs, all of them included the following components that contain services and activities with proven prevention and enrichment potential:

- **Parent Education**: Focus on parenting information (including positive family relationships, family health care, and family stress management) and child development information (including parenting skills, stages of child development, and parent-child relations);
- **Family Literacy/Adult Education**: Focus on parent-child literacy, family learning, adult education, and job training;
- **Child Services**: Focus on developmental screenings (including immunizations), and direct educational services; and
- **Family Services**: Focus on preventive and enriching services such as prenatal care, referrals to community service agencies, counseling, and other services.

An evaluation of the South Carolina Target 2000 pilot program noted the following important findings:

- The pilot projects achieved the goal of effectively delivering comprehensive early child-

hood parent education, particularly with parents of children at risk for school failure;
- The most effective program practices included parent education that strengthened the family's literacy skills, home visits that included both educational and family services, and the use of multiple delivery systems;
- Projects that had strong school and district support achieved the most progress in integrating their efforts into existing early childhood programs;
- Staff competence and training, interagency collaboration, and strong parent support resources were linked to program effectiveness; and
- Pilot projects had a significant influence on improving children's school readiness, particularly in the areas of self esteem, language development, and social competence.

Based on the evaluation of the pilot projects and on feedback from staff and parents involved, a framework was developed for expanding the concept to all school districts in South Carolina. Act 135 requires all districts to plan and implement parenting/family literacy programs. It provides initial funding and options within the funding formula to carry out this mandate. Specifically, the Act requires that a parenting/family literacy component be established (in collaboration with other programs in the school and community) which includes: parent education for parents and guardians with children ages 0-5; an intensive focus on families with children at risk for school failure; developmental screening for children; family literacy and adult education services; and support services that can enable parents to strengthen their role as their children's primary educators.

In an effort to support district and school personnel in developing their programs, 15 of the pilot projects have been designated as technical assistance centers. A listing of these centers including information on how to contact them can be found in Appendix C. These centers are equipped to provide consultation, demonstration, and assistance to schools and districts.

Parenting/Family Literacy Program Guidelines

Act 135 provides specific guidelines on what should be included in the parenting/family literacy program. The law requires that parenting/family literacy programs address four areas: parent education, serving at-risk families, developmental and health screenings, and adult education. The following descriptions of these components incorporate Act 135's regulations and guidelines as well as research of best practices.

Parent Education

Each district must provide parent education to parents and guardians who have children 0-5 years of age. Suggested content and strategies include the following:
- Organize a comprehensive parenting/family literacy program that includes but is not limited to the following areas: prenatal and postnatal care, child health and nutrition, child development (cognitive, social, emotional, motor, and language), developmentally appropriate parent-child interactions, parenting skills, and family management;

- Use various means of offering program activities (home-based and center-based). Offer programs at times that are convenient for parents and in locations that are easily accessible such as public libraries, community centers, and community schools;
- Emphasize the concept that the parent is the child's first and most important teacher. Use curricula such as Parents as Teachers (PAT), The Bowdoin Method, Mother-Child Home Program, Systematic Effective Training for Parents (STEP), Megaskills, and other appropriate materials. Use hands-on activities that are relevant and understandable;
- Offer program experiences that reinforce and strengthen the entire family's literacy habits. Storytelling, parent-child reading, family learning activities, visiting the library, and family sharing at mealtime are some examples of natural experiences all families can use and enjoy; and
- Develop and offer activities that address the needs of specific populations such as teen parents, single parents, and foster parents. Use workshops, skill training, parent support groups, and other strategies that focus on strengthening parents.

Serving At-Risk Families

Programs must include intensive and special efforts to recruit and give priority to serving those parents of children 0-5 who are considered at risk for school failure. The criteria for defining children as at risk for school failure include but are not limited to children who:

- are clearly developmentally delayed;
- are living in dysfunctional or highly unstable family situations;
- are living in poverty;
- have limited English proficiency;
- have parents who have limited formal education and/or are in need of increased educational competence;
- are victims of abuse and/or chronic neglect;
- have poor health;
- have parents who lack developmental skills needed for parenting;
- have teen mothers;
- are in need of specialized services; and
- have other situations likely to cause risk conditions.

In most cases, the highest risk families and children will have multiple problems and should receive priority concern. Collaborate with other community agencies in identifying risk factors especially prevalent in your local community (Neal, Holmes, and Christmus, 1993).

Identification of families whose children may be at risk for school failure should be a comprehensive undertaking beginning with collaboration within the district to gain input from existing child development programs, special education, kindergarten-primary staff, Chapter One, Adult Education, and Vocational Education. Interagency referrals from local groups such as the Health Department, Baby-Net, Department of Social Services, and Head Start is also essential to this process. Formalizing an inter-

agency advisory council, which is required by the law, should strengthen this effort. Regular meetings of this group can broaden the system for identifying consistently high-risk families. Existing Target 2000 pilot projects have found that public awareness campaigns for parents of children ages 0-5 are quite effective.

Strategies for strengthening at-risk families should include: collaborative assessment of needs which are guided by family input and close cooperation with other agencies; specific services that address these needs; parent training and family literacy activities; and comprehensive child services. Services and the delivery of services need to be organized in ways that promote family dignity.

Developmental and Health Screenings

All programs should provide health and developmental screening of children as needed, but at least annually. This can be accomplished through both program initiated activities and through using existing services in agencies and programs such as Baby-Net, Child Find, Head Start, Health Department (Women, Infants, and Children), and Department of Social Services. Community awareness and developmental assessment fairs have proven very effective. Strong interagency and community involvement systems increase the potential for screening and serving more children and parents. Well-designed screening programs offer opportunities for educating and involving parents in prenatal care and related family health activities. Immunization services need to be an integral part of this screening process.

Screening programs should include vision, hearing, and speech and should address identified child health needs. Suggested screening instruments include:

Battelle Developmental Screening (0-8 years)
Denver Developmental Screening (0-6 years) or
Denver Revised Prescreening Developmental Questionnaire
Developmental Inventory Assessment of Learning (DIAL-R) (2-6 years)
Early Accomplishment Profile (Language Assessment Profile, 0-36 months)
Brigance
Bayley Scales of Infant Development
Gesell Developmental Schedules

The screening process should be an integral part of the overall family case management system used to address child and family needs. Health assessments for children must be a part of this screening system.

Adult Education

Programs should offer parents opportunities to improve their educational level, particularly if they lack a high school diploma. Considerations in carrying out this dimension include the following:

- Utilize educational service to provide adult literacy enhancement (self improvement, GED, High School Diploma, Job Training/Support) and counseling to meet the individualized needs of the parent;

- Involve parents in developing an individualized educational plan inclusive of their goals and strategies to achieve these goals;
- Organize the Adult Education program so that services are accessible, affordable, and meaningful to parents; and
- Provide flexible and personalized instruction that increases parents' self-confidence and their potential to achieve their goals.

Program Evaluation

Program evaluation needs to focus on the relevance of program goals to the emerging parent/family needs, effectiveness of program content, staff effectiveness, needed resources, and the relationship of the program to other early childhood and parent/family support activities in the school and community.

All aspects of the program should be evaluated annually. This evaluation should be interrelated with the district's strategic plan evaluation system. It should address the issues related to program effectiveness. Consider the following as possible indicators of program effectiveness:

- Increased percentage of high-risk children being served by the program;
- Increased number of children served in child development, Head Start, and other preschool programs;
- Level of parent participation in various program activities;
- Staff observations on the effectiveness of goals, delivery systems, strategies, and related process aspects of the program;
- Changes in the educational level, job skills, and employment status of participating parents;
- Changes in percentages of teen parents completing high school;
- Parent assessments of program activities;
- Number of developmental screenings completed;
- Number of referrals handled with families involved in the program;
- Narrative data on specific family services provided and the impact these services have on the families; and
- School success indicators for children involved in the program.

Developing Programs to Meet Local Needs

Each community should develop parenting/family literacy programs that meet their local needs. Three phases of program development are to be considered within the parameters of local needs: planning, implementation, and continuing evaluation. Successful programs confirm the need for close attention to these aspects of program development.

Planning

Organize a planning process that is coordinated by a strong and representative planning team. This team should include key staff who will carry out the program, district-level personnel, parents, related early childhood and adult education staff, and

external family service agency staff. The planning team needs to establish the program framework through needs assessment activities and a review of existing resources.

Needs Assessment

The key to the planning process is needs assessment. This assessment should be community based and guided by the following questions:

What are the major risk factors that clearly impede young children's school success?

Who are the parent/family populations that the program needs to serve in intense ways?

Are these populations represented on the planning team?

What are the key problems families face in meeting their basic needs?

What parent/family strengths can be utilized in developing an effective program?

What are the major school readiness issues as identified by teachers, parents, and other school staff?

What areas of parenting and family life need to be addressed for all parents in the community?

In reviewing the needs assessment data for your school and community, keep in mind the key risk factors identified in research: disease or physical handicaps, malnutrition, drug abuse, chronic health problems, extreme poverty, chronic social isolation, severe family dysfunction, high-risk neighborhoods, illiteracy, and chronic unemployment. Ineffective parenting is also a key risk factor (Boyer, 1991). These risk factors have many sources and are highly correlated with children's difficulties in school. Neal, Holmes and Christmus (1993) offer a 10-step process for carrying out the needs assessment that focuses on identifying risk factors in the community (Appendix E).

Existing Resources

Another important step in the planning process is the identification and organization of existing human resources that can be used to address targeted needs. Parenting/family literacy programs need to carry out three steps in this regard:

- Identify existing services and programs such as the Health Department, social services agencies and groups, churches, and civic groups that offer specific resources of value in meeting program needs. For example, the local library has tremendous literacy resources. The Health Department has many programs like prenatal care and child immunization.
- Organize existing resources in ways that provide parents and families with easy

access to services. Develop an interagency planning and action team that meets regularly and is willing to access services in more innovative and effective ways.

- Utilize collaboratively developed delivery systems in carrying out parenting and family support programs. Recent efforts include co-sponsorship of health, education, and social service activities. Agencies and schools are sharing staff, equipment, programs, and resources to attain needed services.

Program development teams also need to review and study existing parenting and family literacy efforts. Nationally, programs like Parents As Teachers, Kenan Family Literacy Model, Minnesota's Early Learning and Development Program, and many others offer useful ideas and resources. See the program summaries section of the appendices to this resource guide for more information. Visit and study some of the Parent Education Program Technical Assistance sites operating in South Carolina. Observe, study, and analyze the various programs with the intent of adapting ideas and strategies to your local needs.

Program Framework

Develop your framework for accomplishing program goals. While this task may be primarily the work of the parenting/family literacy planning team, it is important to get input from all representatives of the school community. Use an inclusive approach to planning, including as many different people, ideas, and perspectives as possible. The team should interact with the school improvement council and district-level planning groups to assure consistency with the other portions of Act 135's school and district plans.

You may want to create a mission statement for your program, or it may fit within a specified strategy or action plan of your school or district 5-year plan. If you have a program mission statement, it should provide a vision of what the program should attempt to accomplish. Evolving from the mission statement are specific objectives, strategies, needed support resources, staffing needs, and plans for continual assessment and program revision. Objectives should establish the direction for the program including the who, what, when, where, and how of the program's work. The use of a timeline can help to provide planners with some specific benchmarks for the program to accomplish.

It is important to plan with flexibility in mind as the program direction will be refined continually with input from participants. Strategies should include the methods, plans, and involvement incentives that are likely to support achievement of program objectives. Involve staff, parents, and personnel from appropriate social service and other related agencies in shaping this aspect of the plan and use feedback from participants for continuing revisions.

Based on your objectives and proposed strategies, develop a resource and staffing plan. This aspect of the plan will be closely related to the program model and delivery systems you choose to use in implementation. Create an ideal staffing design, even though you may have to adapt it to the realities of available resources. This plan can provide an initial framework that guides the long-term staff development of the parent education project. Adaptation and revisions are an essential part of your assessment and evaluation scheme. Staff training is critical to carrying out the specific activities identified in your needs assessment.

Choose, adapt, or develop a program model and delivery system that will enable your program to carry out its purpose or mission effectively. Depending upon your objectives, available resources, and related factors, use the program model to guide your implementation but not confine or restrict it. Home-based, center-based, and possible combinations of these approaches need to be adapted to local situations.

Delivery systems might include monthly home visitation, small group meetings, conferencing, diagnostic screening, adult education, and many related activities. Avoid reinventing entirely new services that already exist. Capitalize on existing resources and collaboration to reshape parenting/family literacy services. For example, existing child development programs, adult education services, child screening activities, and family service systems can be reorganized and integrated into a more effective plan of action. Existing South Carolina Parent Education Technical Assistance Centers provide a major resource for exploring possible program models and implementation systems.

Implementation

Initial considerations in the implementation process include: selection of program location, recruitment and selection of staff, a public awareness effort, organization of program policies and practices, and development of needed supports to maximize the potential of program success.

Program Location

Program location needs to match the model and the methods of your program system. It should also match your long-term vision of the program's efforts. Initially, you want a location that provides a useful working environment that is accessible to parents and families. Avoid locations that isolate you physically and socially from the people you need to be linked to and that may limit your effectiveness in serving families. Adequate office space and resources are essential. Locations that provide for natural integration of services (such as adult education, housing of needed family services, and child development) provide immediate visibility and identity. For example, one of the South Carolina Parent Education Programs initially developed a model school site and subsequently initiated similar projects in other schools in the district. Smaller districts might locate the program in a centrally accessible school to serve all of the districts parents and children. Larger districts might develop a centrally located family resource center with satellite activities housed in different schools or community places in the district.

Staffing

Staffing is the key to the program's success. Staff need to be competent in early childhood education and parent/family dynamics. They should be caring, compassionate, and highly qualified in carrying out parent education and family literacy activities. The following criteria are suggested as guidelines for hiring staff (Powell, 1989):

- Knowledge about human growth and development, child development, family dynamics, and contemporary family issues;
- Knowledge about positive parenting skills and curricula for conveying these skills to parents and family members;

- Understanding, respect, and skills for working within a multicultural program context;
- Skills (and the desire) for communicating effectively, using group dynamics, listening, and organizational strategies that promote parent and family empowerment;
- Total respect for the parent and family viewpoint;
- Sensitivity to the needs and strengths of parents, children, and families from various backgrounds and contexts;
- Effective interpersonal relationship skills for carrying out diverse job roles with many different people and groups; and
- Past experience in working with parents and families.

Staff roles and assignments need to be clearly articulated and monitored. Program staff need to be an integral part of the district's overall early childhood education program. Staff salaries and rewards should be commensurate with other similar district staff positions. The staffing design should capitalize on existing staff resources, volunteers, and collaborative staffing with allied agencies. A key role of staff is to coordinate existing school and community resources in new ways, thus increasing parent and family use of existing services. Parents who have or exhibit leadership skills need to be engaged in appropriate service roles in the program.

Public Awareness

Public awareness and involvement in the program is critical to its success. Develop a plan to inform and involve the public as well as to recruit families. The following strategies can be effective in accomplishing this process:

- Develop and disseminate an appealing and useful program brochure. This brochure should identify key services, possible needs, and desired outcomes;
- Distribute brochures and accompanying media materials throughout the community and the school district. Use posters, radio and television, and newspaper articles to highlight the program and create public awareness;
- Visit school and community groups and explain the purpose and functions of the program;
- Identify existing programs of a similar nature and begin initiatives to foster collaborative arrangements with them;
- Hold open house activities and encourage parents to visit anytime, especially during the early, formative period of the project; and
- Visit local family service agencies and explain the details of the new program effort and explore new ways of working together.

Public awareness can stimulate support and involvement. The existing South Carolina Parent Education Programs found many creative resources through this process. For example, senior citizens volunteered to help with child care during meetings, local business groups contributed time and money, and many teachers volunteered to conduct parenting programs and to help with diagnostic assessment activities.

Policies & Procedures

Program policies and procedures need to be clearly but flexibly developed and used to carry out the program's purpose or mission. Questions to be initially addressed, and then continuously revisited, include:

Who is to be served?

How are services to be delivered (and who is responsible for delivering them)?

How many parents/families is it feasible to serve?

What are staff job roles and responsibilities?

Who monitors staff performance?

How are parents involved in shaping program activities?

How is the program integrated into overall school, district, and community systems?

Who is ultimately responsible for the program's operations?

What evaluation system will be used to review program achievements on an annual basis?

These and other questions related to program operations need to be clarified and put in policy format before and during the early stages of functioning.

Support Systems

Successful programs have strong support systems. Develop supportive conditions within the program's structure so that parents can participate without unusual stress. For example, by providing child care while parents are involved in parent education or adult education activities, stress is reduced or eliminated. Transportation, adaptive scheduling of activities, providing light meals, and utilizing delivery systems the parents are most comfortable with are additional supports that make a difference in parent participation. Other supports and incentives have included helping parents make initial contacts to access services they qualify for, assisting parent groups in setting up car-pools to get to needed services, locating services in their children's schools (and allowing them to use district transportation to come to the school for services), and other creative supports.

Evaluation

Parent education and family literacy programs should use evaluation strategies to achieve three important tasks: document what is taking place to achieve program goals, assess the effectiveness of how the program is being carried out, and determine what changes are needed to improve the program.

Documentation of program achievements is essential to building pride in the program, sharing with others what is being accomplished, and determining the utility of the program. Questions such as the following can guide this part of the evaluation process:

What activities and services are being implemented?

Who is primarily involved in carrying out the various activities and services?

How are the activities and services being delivered?

Who is participating in the program's activities and services?

What community groups are working with the program in carrying out different services and activities?

Number of home visits, attendance at program functions, types and amounts of specific services provided, and related data offer a map of what is actually happening in the program. Information on how many children have been immunized, numbers of mothers receiving prenatal care, and data on family services inform the public and the program leaders about the immediate achievements of the program.

Assessing the effectiveness of the program's ability to meet its goals is an important aspect of the program's identity and credibility in the community. Programs need to use questions like the following to examine how the program is working:

What are staff perceptions of the utility of all aspects of the program?

What do parent assessments of different program activities and services tell us?

Is program content seen as relevant and useful in meeting parent and family needs?

Are program delivery systems effective in getting services to the desired population?

Staff and parent observations offer sources of continuing feedback on what is working in the program. Formal surveys, informal focus groups, and observational data provide means for assessing program events and services on a day-to-day basis. Annual assessments can provide material for refining and improving overall program functioning.

Using information gained in needs assessment can assist program leaders in determining needed changes to strengthen the program. This should be a continuous process such as the following questions suggest:

Are our goals reflective of the changing needs of the families in our community?

What new activities and services would strengthen the program in light of newly identified needs?

Are we providing services such as transportation and child care that enable all parents to participate?

What recommendations for program improvement have been identified by staff and participating parents?

Are there ways to gain stronger collaboration between the program and other school and community groups?

Evaluation also needs to focus on the program's influence on participating parents and their children. Utilize various ways of determining the program's impact. For example, avoid using just standardized assessment instruments to evaluate the impact of the program on children and parents. The following is a beginning list of strategies to use in this part of the evaluation:

- Document parent achievements such as the number of parents who complete adult education requirements, attendance at parent meetings, and the number of parents who complete special family literacy activities;
- Use parent and staff testimonials about specific program benefits such as immunizations, family services, improved parent-child relations, and parent achievements in adult education courses;
- Use developmentally-based child assessments such as the Denver Developmental Screening to profile children's gains over their growth span;
- Develop profiles of families involved in the program to highlight the impact of various activities and services; and
- Document children's language improvement, gains on school readiness criteria, and their actual school performance.

Program evaluation should be a proactive process that provides feedback to improve services and to promote a sense of identity and pride in staff, parents, and children. Effective evaluation helps the total community take pride in having a parenting/literacy program.

Summary

Three steps provide an overview of the development process needed in establishing parenting/family literacy programs: plan, implement, and review.

Plan the program with care and in light of local needs. Research and study successful

programs, carry out needs assessment, visit other programs, assess available services, coordinate with other agencies, involve parents in the planning, and integrate staff into the overall planning scheme.

Implement the program in relationship to the needs of parents and families being served. Locate services close to families, utilize staff effectively, offer relevant services, provide needed supports so parents can participate, and capitalize on available community resources. Use multiple strategies to reach parents who typically do not get involved in parent and family programs. Interrelate program services with existing early childhood and adult education activities. Collaboration, communication, and involvement are the key attributes of effective implementation.

Review and assess program activities regularly, using feedback from participants and staff to further adapt program services. Evaluation is your best assurance that the program is evolving in ways that are responsive to the real needs of the families being served. Use parent discussion, surveys, document analysis, focus groups, and other techniques to carry out needed assessments.

Successful parenting and family programs provide comprehensive services that strengthen families during the early childhood years. They plan, implement, and refine these services in ways that promote children's school readiness through a strong family-school partnership.

Appendix A
References and Suggested Further Reading

E. Boyer. (1991). Ready to Learn: A Mandate for the Nation. Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

A. Ellwood. (1988). Prove to me that MELD makes a difference. In H. Weiss & F. Jacobs. (Eds.). Evaluating Family Programs. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

L. Engstrom. (1988). The Minnesota experience with family-centered early childhood programs. Community Education Journal. 37, 16-18.

P. Levenstein. (1988). Messages from Home. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press.

A. Melaville and M. Blank. (1993). Together We Can: A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

M. Meyerhoff and B. White. (1986). New parents as teachers. Educational Leadership. November, 42-46.

J. Neal, B. Holmes and G. Christmus. (1993). 10 Steps to School Readiness and Community Prevention of Adolescent Problem Behaviors. Columbia, SC: South Carolina Budget and Control Board.

D. Powell. (Ed.). (1988). Parent Education as Early Childhood Intervention. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

D. Powell. (1989). Families and Early Childhood Programs. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

South Carolina Governor's Office. (1993). A Citizen's Resource Book to Health and Human Services in South Carolina. Columbia, SC: Office of the Governor.

K. Swick. (1993). Strengthening Parents and Families During the Early Childhood Years. Champaign, IL: Stipes.

K. Swick and S. Graves (1993). Empowering At-Risk Families During the Early Childhood Years. Washington, D.C.: National Education Association.

H. Weiss and F. Jacobs. (1988). Evaluating Family Programs. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

B. White. (1988). Educating Infants and Toddlers. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Appendix B
Sample Program Designs

Minnesota's Early Learning and Development Program (MELD)

Minnesota's Early Learning and Development Program aims to reach parents through local community support groups that are established within a larger framework of parent and family education. A major criteria of success for MELD is that parents become more competent in handling the stress of the early transition to parenthood and the evolving dynamics of family life. The program uses a very flexible approach, allowing each community to develop strategies that work for their parents. Research carried out over a 15-year period indicates this community-centered approach works. In particular, the program uses curriculum that is responsive to identified parent needs. For example, materials on parent-child relations, family management, toddlerhood, and health and nutrition seem particularly popular among parents enrolled in the program.

One of the most striking features of MELD is that of parental involvement in shaping program content in teaching, and in learning and supporting each other in becoming capable in the child-rearing capacity. This program places emphasis on reaching out to parents of different needs and contexts. Parents learn with and from each other in peer self-help groups. The groups are facilitated by experienced parents who have been trained but who also are seen as peers by the other parents. Groups typically last 2 years, beginning during pregnancy and continuing through the child's second year. Adaptation to parent desires have often influenced extended group involvement through the early school years.

Three strengths of this program include: the early involvement of parents during prenatal and early family development, a strong reliance on parental involvement in shaping program content and structure, and the broad use of community resources in a collaborative manner.

For further information on this program, read:

L. Engstrom. (1988). The Minnesota experience with family-centered early childhood programs. Community Education Journal. 37, 16-18.

Home Instruction for Preschool Youngsters Program (HIPPY)

This program is based on three factors that have proven to be highly related to school success: the home environment, child-rearing practices, and the degree to which education is valued in the home. HIPPY is the result of the efforts of the Research Institute for Innovation in Education of the School of Education of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem which sought to facilitate the integration of Israel's disadvantaged children.

The basic questions examined in the planning of this program were: how to involve mothers in their children's education, how to provide the children with attractive and effective home learning materials, and how to build a program that would work with disadvantaged children. The results of their research were integrated into the program HIPPY.

The program is a home-based enrichment program in which mothers work with their children from ages of 4 through 6 on a particular set of educational activities. Mothers receive a weekly packet from a paraprofessional who is a mother from the same community. The educator visits in the home one week and the parents attend a group meeting the next week. Role playing is used in the teaching of the mothers. The group meetings are used to introduce mothers to the concept and activity for the next week. Discussion, sharing, and problem solving highlight the group meetings. Language, cognitive development, and academic readiness are the themes that prevail in the program's work.

Research on the use of HIPPY indicates that: mothers were more likely to participate in the community, aides involved in the program tended to take on other community leadership roles too, the children were better prepared to begin school, and the program was accomplished primarily through the use of local resources.

For more information contact:

HIPPY, USA
49 W. 23rd St., 5th floor
New York, NY 10010
212-645-2006

Kenan Family Literacy Program

Initiated in 1988, the Kenan Family Literacy Program aims to improve education for at-risk children and their at-risk parents by intervening early in the family's life to disrupt the cycle of undereducation and illiteracy (Darling, 1989).The program uses a combination of parent education, early childhood education, and adult education to achieve its goals.

Four components comprise the substance of the program: Parent Literacy Training, Parenting and Parent Education, Early Childhood Education, and Human Resources Development.

Parent Literacy Training attempts to provide parents with individualized assistance on educational goals established by the parents. Experiences range from offering GED courses to providing job training programs.

Parenting and Parent Education are carried out through two processes: parent time and parent-child time. During parent time, small groups of parents study and discuss different topics on parenting and child development of interest to the group. Their leader is skilled in both early childhood development and parent education. Parent-child time offers an opportunity for parents and children to get involved in joint activities that stimulate and reinforce interaction within the family. Teachers model appropriate interactions with children and parents have opportunities to use these new skills with children in learning center activities and in individualized activities.

Early Childhood Education is carried out through the use of the High/Scope Curriculum. Children are involved in learning activities they plan and carry out. The curriculum focuses on the broad range of learning skills children develop during the preschool years.

Human Resources Development is accomplished by involving parents in activities where they develop job-seeking skills. They are placed in simulated job situations and gain experience and confidence in developing this part of their lives.

For more information on family literacy approaches, contact:

National Family Literacy Center
401 S. 4th Avenue, Suite 610
Louisville, KY 40202-3449
(502-584-1133)

Parents As Teachers Program

Parents As Teachers (PAT) is based on the belief that parents are their children's first and most important teacher. It is a home-school-community partnership designed to give all children the best possible start in life. PAT, which originated in Missouri, is based on the research work of Dr. Burton L. White. The program covers child development from birth to age 3 and beyond, and suggests parent activities which encourage language and intellectual growth, curiosity and social skills. It attempts to foster optimal development of young children, identify disabilities and delays as early as possible, and increase parents' skills in helping their children overcome these difficulties. Parents As Teachers works with all parents in the following ways:

Personal Visits: PAT certified parent educators, trained in child development and home visiting, come to each family's home. The educators help parents understand each stage of their child's development and offer practical tips on ways to encourage learning.

Group Meetings: Here, parents find out they're not alone. Programs schedule times for parents to get together, to gain new insights and to share their experiences, common concerns, and successes. Group meetings also provide families the opportunity to participate in parent-child activities.

Screenings: PAT offers periodic screening of overall development, language, hearing, and vision. The goal is to provide early detection of potential problems to prevent difficulties later in school.

Referral Network: PAT helps families link with special services, if needed, that are beyond the scope of the program.

The program has been thoroughly researched by outside evaluators and some of the key findings include:

- Children have made significant gains in language, social, and cognitive development.
- PAT children have scored higher on school performance indicators than their peers who were not enrolled in the program.
- Parents report gains in knowledge of child development, improved relations with their children, and more competence in carrying out their role as their children's educators.

For more information on PAT, contact:

Parents as Teachers National Center
9374 Olive Boulevard
St. Louis, Missouri 63132
(314-432-4330)

The High/Scope Cognitively Oriented Curriculum

Based upon the concept that young children are active learners who grow in developmental stages, the High/Scope Curriculum is designed to engage children, parents, and teachers in a multisensory, active learning program. From the perspective that active learning is at the heart of the developmental process, the curriculum focuses on key experiences that enable children to fully develop their cognitive, language, social, and general readiness skills. Key learning experiences presented in the curriculum include: language, problem solving, social, logical reasoning, time and space, and related learning areas.

The curriculum emphasizes the importance of the child becoming an independent learner. Teaching practices focus on organizing an environment where children choose from various developmentally appropriate learning activities. The learning cycle of "plan, do, and review" is used to help children develop skills in self management. The curriculum engages children in actively exploring the learning environment through hands-on activities and through positive and supportive interactions with caring adults.

For more information on this curriculum, consult Young Children in Action: A Manual for Preschool Educators published by The High/Scope Press, 600 North River Street, Ypsilanti, Michigan, 48197, Phone (313-485-2000).

Appendix C
South Carolina Parent Education Program
Technical Assistance Centers

Lee Looney (260-5101)
Parent Education Coordinator
Anderson School District 5
1909 West Market Street
Anderson, SC 29624

Kay Broxton (525-4200)
Parent Education Coordinator
Beaufort County Schools
P.O. Drawer 309
Beaufort, SC 29901

Everleen K. Frederick (655-7310)
Parent Education Coordinator
Calhoun County School District
P.O. Box 215
St. Matthews, SC 29135

Beverly Madewell (833-0800)
Parent Education Coordinator
Laurens School District 56
Drawer 484
Clinton, SC 29325

Stella Holliday (843-2888)
Parent Education Coordinator
Pickens County Schools
310 West Main Street
Liberty, SC 29657

Pat Tolbert (229-3431)
Parent Education Coordinator
Greenwood School District 50
1802 E. Durst Avenue
Greenwood, SC 29646

Sylivia Yarborough (568-4706)
Parent Education Coordinator
Lexington District 4
P.O. Box 569
Swansea, SC 29160

Lorine Pressley (546-2561)
Parent Education Coordinator
Georgetown County Schools
624 Front Street
Georgetown, SC 29440

Karen Moore (476-7066)
Parent Education Coordinator
Spartanburg District 4
Woodruff Primary School
Woodruff, SC 29388

Barbara Ragin (499-3441)
Parent Education Coordinator
Sumter School District 2
Hillcrest High School
P.O. Box 151 (McLaughlin House)
Dalzell, SC 29040

Mary Foster (429-1772)
Parent Education Coordinator
Union County School District
P.O. Box 907
Union, SC 29379

Pat Wolfe (548-4677)
Parent Education Coordinator
York School District 4
110 Munn Road
Fort Mill, SC 29715

Brenda Ayers (398-5100)
Parent Education Coordinator
Darlington County Schools
271 North Main Street
Darlington, SC 29532

Clare Hodge (359-4178)
Parent Education Coordinator
Lexington School District 1
P. O. Box 1869
Lexington, SC 29072

Helen Smith (423-8340)
Parent Education Coordinator
Marion Districts 1 and 2
616 Northside Avenue
Marion, SC 29571

Appendix D
Parenting/Family Literacy Planning and Implementation Checklist

_____ Parenting/family literacy planning team has been formed and is representative of all stakeholders.

_____ Planning team has studied the key findings on effective parent education programs.

_____ State guidelines on designing and implementing parent education programs have been reviewed.

_____ Evaluation findings and effective practices data from existing South Carolina Target 2000 Parent Education Programs have been reviewed.

_____ Site visits to appropriate state and/or national program demonstration centers have been conducted.

_____ Planning team has reviewed material on the key program components of parent education, serving at-risk families, conducting health/developmental screenings, adult education, family services, and program evaluation.

_____ Planning team has organized a program development process including:

- appropriate local needs assessment
- assessment of existing resources
- formation of mission statement
- development of resources and staffing plan
- selection and organization of program models

_____ Program implementation specifics such as the following have been addressed:

- target population identified
- location(s)
- staffing
- curriculum
- services
- delivery systems
- public awareness
- policies and procedures
- supports and incentives

_____ Program evaluation plans and strategies have been organized and integrated into the process.

_____ Intra-district collaboration schemes are organized so that program activities are closely related to the district s overall early childhood initiative.

_____ Community and interagency collaboration strategies are an integral part of program plans and activities.

_____ Needed parent/family support services have been organized.

Appendix E
10 Steps to School Readiness

The purpose of **10 STEPS** is to provide a common risk factor approach to readiness promotion and adolescent problem prevention in communities across South Carolina. Community leaders, youth workers, and other concerned adults will identify key risk factors which, if reduced or prevented, could minimize many childhood and adolescent problems in their community. Rather than addressing symptoms of problems, they will identify **core risk factors**, those with the greatest potential for reducing the prevalence of early childhood problems.

The **10 STEPS** process consists of 10 steps for identifying and addressing readiness and adolescent risk factors in a community. The process works best when it is used by a group composed of early childhood development professionals, youth workers, health and social service professionals, and other concerned adults from a single community. Although the 10 steps may seem like a lot, some of the steps take only a few minutes to complete. Most groups will complete the entire process within 3-4 hours. The 10 steps are:

1. Learn about new research which demonstrates that the risk factors for the major school readiness and adolescent problems are closely related, and in some cases identical.
2. Identify and list the risk factors that impact children and youth in your community.
3. Prioritize the risk factors and select the **key risk factors** most likely to impact children and youth in your community.
4. Analyze what is currently being done to address each of the key risk factors.
5. Identify other community resources that could be enlisted to address the key risk factors.
6. Analyze barriers to action for each key risk factor.
7. Determine the most effective actions that your community can take to reduce each of the key risk factors.
8. Decide who can do what needs to be done.
9. Organize for immediate action with all involved.
10. Organize your community through top-level support.

For additional information, read:

J. Neal, B. Holmes and G. Christmus. (1993). 10 Steps to School Readiness and Community Prevention of Adolescent Problem Behaviors. Columbia, SC: South Carolina Budget and Control Board.

School Improvement Council Assistance
College of Education • Suite 023 • USC
Columbia, SC 29208
803 • 777-7658/ 800 • 868-2232